

# PLAN forward



Lincoln-Lancaster County  
2050 Comprehensive Plan

The Lincoln-Lancaster County 2050 Comprehensive Plan is a roadmap to “plan forward”, not only in time, but in concept, to envision a community that is Livable, Equitable, Thriving, Resilient, and Innovative.

# Implementation



Once adopted by the City and County, PlanForward becomes the community's guide for directing its resources and efforts toward making the common vision a reality. The ways to achieve this objective are further described in the sections below.

## Land Use Administration

The planning process has long had at its disposal a number of administrative and regulatory tools for implementing comprehensive plans. Many of these reach back eighty to one hundred years. Some of the land use administration approaches to be used in plan implementation include:

**Zoning.** Zoning is a legal means cities and counties use for deciding how land can be used, the intensity of those land uses, and the relationships between various land uses. Nebraska State law, as with most states, requires zoning to be developed in accordance with the community's adopted Comprehensive Plan. This is one of the primary reasons cities and counties have Comprehensive Plans. As a legal document, zoning is reflected both as a map showing the geographic boundaries of each district and a written ordinance detailing the uses and conditions of each district. For the City of Lincoln, the zoning ordinance is presented in Title 27 of the Lincoln Municipal Code; while the County's zoning standards are contained in the County Zoning Regulations.

**Subdivision.** A subdivision is the process of dividing land into lots and/or streets. While a variety of standards apply to where, when, and how the subdivision of land can happen, having an approved subdivision plat is a basic step in the development process. The City's subdivision code is found in Title 26 of the Lincoln Municipal Code. For the County, these regulations can be found in the County Subdivision Regulations.

**Design Standards.** Special site design or other conditions not otherwise covered in the zoning ordinance or subdivision standards are contained in a series of design standards. These standards spell out unique characteristics that may apply to a type of development proposal. These include, for example, design considerations for childcare centers, trails, new construction in older, established neighborhoods and the downtown/Antelope Valley area.

### ***Five Year Tasks***

The Comprehensive Plan includes many policies that contain specific action steps to be completed in the near term. The table below summarizes the specific action steps and work items to be completed within the next five years. This table only includes a small number of the total action steps found in the Comprehensive Plan, and it focuses on items related to land use administration and Planning Department activities. Completion of these action steps will be reviewed at the next 5-year plan update.

**Table 1.a: Five Year Implementation Tasks****Priority Action Steps Over Next Five Years**

-----	<b>Expand opportunities for residential infill, including affordable and "missing middle" housing.</b>
<b>P1.10</b>	Continue to develop affordable housing zoning text amendments that implement recommendations from the Affordable Housing Coordinated Action Plan and other documents and community input.
<b>P2.20, P3.15</b>	Examine current residential zoning districts and propose modifications to encourage 'missing middle' units (single-family attached, cottage courts, townhomes, live-work, and a variety of three- and four-plex configurations), including affordable units, to people with a range of incomes. Neighborhood edges in particular present an opportunity for missing middle housing. Neighborhood edges in particular present an opportunity for missing middle housing.
<b>P2.15</b>	Develop and propose zoning text amendments that will allow platted, nonconforming lots to be buildable.
<b>P8.4</b>	Provide a mechanism for adjustments in older zoning districts to lot area, height, setbacks, and parking standards, similar to the provisions already available for newer districts.
-----	<b>Expand access to accessory dwelling units (ADUs).</b>
<b>P2.14, P3.12</b>	Evaluate potential updates to the zoning code to allow expanded opportunities for ADUs throughout the community.
-----	<b>Examine new ways to promote high-quality redevelopment within Mixed Use Redevelopment Nodes and Corridors.</b>
<b>P6.1</b>	For Primary Mixed Use Redevelopment Nodes and Corridors, examine updates to the B-5 Planned Regional Business zoning district that would address items such as: density, site layout, parking, building scale, and design standards.
<b>P6.2</b>	Develop design standards to be utilized across all Mixed Use Redevelopment Nodes and Corridors. Design standards should be clearly written and allow for an efficient, expeditious review process, while especially focusing on the interface with residential neighborhoods, attractive streetscapes, and safe and comfortable movement of people – whatever their mode of travel.
<b>P6.7</b>	Examine policies to encourage commercial Floor Area Ratios of at least 0.5 within buildable areas designated for commercial development inside the project boundary (including public and semi-public buildings). This strategy encourages significant returns on public investment by developing high-quality properties with sustained value, long-term viable businesses to generate sales tax, and efficient use of land and infrastructure resources.
<b>P6.8</b>	Examine policies to encourage residential densities of at least 15 dwelling units per gross acre within buildable areas inside the project boundary. This strategy encourages significant returns on public investment by developing high-quality properties with sustained value, supports new businesses in the mixed use center, makes public transportation more viable, and uses land and infrastructure more efficiently.
-----	<b>Evaluate expansion of design standards from a menu of options.</b>

<i>Nodes and Corridors</i>	
<b>P6.1</b>	For Primary Mixed Use Redevelopment Nodes and Corridors examine updates to the B-5 Planned Regional Business zoning district that would address items such as: density, site layout, parking, building scale, and design standards.
<b>P6.2</b>	Develop design standards to be utilized across all Mixed Use Redevelopment Nodes and Corridors. Design standards should be clearly written and allow for an efficient, expeditious review process, while especially focusing on the interface with residential neighborhoods, attractive streetscapes, and safe and comfortable movement of people – whatever their mode of travel.
<i>Redevelopment Projects</i>	
<b>P8.3</b>	Develop new design standards for redevelopment projects, particularly TIF projects, that encourage density, a variety of housing types, optimize infrastructure costs, and help lower the overall cost of property development. Design standards provide assurance that projects will enhance and add enduring quality to the surrounding neighborhood and avoid conflicting visions among developers, neighbors, and city officials.
<i>Commercial Areas</i>	
<b>P34.1</b>	Implement expanded commercial design standards that could be applied across various zoning districts or corridors. Design standards should be clearly written and allow for an efficient, expeditious review process, while especially focusing on the interface with residential neighborhoods, attractive streetscapes, and safe and comfortable movement of people – whatever their mode of travel.
<i>Corridors and Entryways</i>	
<b>P34.7</b>	Strengthen design standards for commercial and mixed-use development along major travel corridors, to reflect a positive visual image that engenders community pride and identity.
<b>P35.1</b>	Study key entryways to Lincoln and adopt zoning tools and incentives to protect and enhance “first impressions” of the community, including a thoughtful, distinctive, and attractive system of “wayfinding” signs to key community attractions.
<b>P34.8</b>	Evaluate the expansion of the neighborhood design standards area to apply for residential districts within the 1970 city limits boundary. Neighborhood Design Standards currently apply within the 1950 city limits boundary.
<i>Miscellaneous</i>	
<b>P3.4</b>	Develop new design standards or zoning tools that encourage density, optimize infrastructure costs, and help lower the overall cost of property development.
-----	<b>Increase the opportunity for home occupations and live/work arrangements.</b>
<b>P2.23, P3.17</b>	Consider zoning revisions that align with home occupation trends and the community’s expectations.
<b>P49.1e</b>	Revise codes to allow for more opportunities to work and live in the same place.
-----	<b>Develop enhanced standards for new developing and redeveloping neighborhoods.</b>
<b>P2.16, P3.13</b>	Review the Community Unit Plan requirements and consider revisions to meet the intent of developing creative, quality, and unique residential developments.
<b>P3.4</b>	Develop new design standards or zoning tools that encourage density, optimize infrastructure costs, and help lower the overall cost of property development.

-----	<b>Evaluate options for new acreage subdivisions.</b>
<b>P4.9</b>	Review the “build-through” model for acreages in the County and make recommendations that align with the PlanForward policies and growth scenario.
-----	<b>Eliminate or reduce minimum parking requirements.</b>
<b>P11.2</b>	Eliminate or reduce minimum parking requirements in additional zoning districts and include conditions that minimize the impact on neighboring properties.
-----	<b>Increase opportunities to grow and sell local food.</b>
<b>P22.5</b>	Allow commercial agriculture, including points of sale for foods grown on-site, in all zoning districts at appropriate locations and with appropriate standards.
<b>P22.9</b>	Evaluate potential for local food production through urban market gardening on designated City owned properties – some of which may currently be in row crop production. Establish criteria for evaluation such as soil condition, availability of water for irrigation, impact on adjacent uses, etc.
-----	<b>Reduce obstacles to locate child care facilities.</b>
<b>P45.2</b>	Examine building and zoning code requirements for child care centers and family child care homes to determine if there are any obstacles that could be removed while maintaining the safety of the building occupants.
-----	<b>Create a Complete Neighborhoods measurement tool.</b>
<b>P2.10, P3.6</b>	Develop and utilize a measurement tool to evaluate neighborhoods in terms of how well they achieve PlanForward’s goals for design, sustainability, and Complete Neighborhoods goals.
-----	<b>Update the Natural Resources GIS (NRGIS) data file to create an improved inventory of environmental resources in the county.</b>
<b>P19.6, P24.9</b>	Resurvey and update the County’s prairie and grassland inventory for inclusion in the Natural Resources Geographic Information Systems (NRGIS).
-----	<b>Create and evaluate an inventory of non-agriculture uses currently allowed in the county.</b>
<b>P16.9</b>	Review the county zoning ordinance to create an inventory of non-agricultural uses currently allowed in rural areas of the county to evaluate possible changes.
<b>P13.5</b>	Develop a zoning implementation strategy for the Light Industrial land use category.

## Financial Resources

The provision of services is one of the primary responsibilities of City and County government. Financing these services without creating an undo financial burden for the taxpayer is, and will continue to be, a challenge. There needs to be a balance between new infrastructure in developing areas and the improvements and maintenance needs of the existing community. It is also important to remember that the initial cost of improvements does not reflect the ongoing maintenance and operations of those facilities.

### **Strategies for Financing Rural Infrastructure**

**Group new acreages in limited areas.** This will enable services to be provided more efficiently, such as minimizing the amount of paved roads, reducing and shortening school bus routes and providing more cost effective rural water district service.

**Direct growth to cities and towns.** Direct and support residential, commercial, and industrial growth to incorporated cities and towns in order to maintain a tax base for the services and utilities in the towns, as well as to economize on the costs of services and utilities.

### ***Strategies for Financing Urban Infrastructure***

**Take a Balanced Approach.** The community at large should provide more financing of maintenance and improvements in existing areas. Both new and existing developments should pay their fair share of improvement costs due to growth and maintenance. In general, improvements which are of general benefit to the whole community should be paid by the community, while improvements which are of special benefit to a specific area should be paid by that area.

**Develop a Fair and Predictable System.** Distribute infrastructure costs fairly among all property owners who benefit from the improvements. The goal of the financing system is that costs should be known in advance of development. Property owners should participate in funding improvements in new areas at generally the same rate.

**Encourage Higher Densities.** Maximize the community's investment in infrastructure through well-designed and appropriately placed density in residential and commercial development. Both for new development and redevelopment, an increase in well-designed and appropriately placed density will decrease the amount of infrastructure necessary overall in the community.

**Minimize Impact on Affordable Housing.** Infrastructure financing should not increase the cost of affordable housing in Lincoln, particularly housing that is targeted for residents making less than 80 percent of the area median income.

**Minimize Impact on Those Who Are Not Developing Land.** As much as possible, property owners should only be assessed or pay the improvement costs at the time they seek approval of development proposals or building permits. Financing mechanisms should be sensitive to property owners in an area under development who don't want to develop their land at that time, but should not encourage them to hold their property out of development indefinitely. Property owners need to be educated about growth and infrastructure plans to reduce the element of surprise and to foster more informed personal planning decisions.

**Maintain Expanding System.** The addition of infrastructure and growth of the City requires attention to provide an adequate level of service. Expanding facilities adds financial maintenance needs for all city services.

### **Capital Improvements Programming**

Capital improvements have historically been financed by general revenues, special assessments, user fees, revenue bonds, grants from Federal and State government, other local and state taxes and general obligation bonds. Capital projects can be broadly defined as new projects to meet additional needs of the community and rehabilitation of the built infrastructure. It is imperative that timely maintenance of capital improvements occurs to protect the City's and County's investment and minimize future maintenance and replacement costs. As an implementation tool, the capital improvement programming process plays a vital role in guiding when and where the city, and even to some degree rural areas, grow. Capital improvements programming can be separated into two broad areas:

#### ***Public Sector Contributions***

Capital improvements are generally defined as any improvements with a useful life in excess of 15 years. The direction and timing of these improvements have a powerful influence on the development of a community. Arterial roads, major water mains, trails, wastewater treatment and transmission lines, parks, recreational facilities, street lights, fire and police stations, libraries, government administration buildings, schools, electrical facilities, and sanitary landfills are all basic elements of what makes up a city. Hundreds of millions of dollars of public tax dollars and user fees are invested each year in these facilities. The public process used to determine where and when such investment occurs plays a fundamental role in determining how PlanForward is achieved.

The City of Lincoln designates those capital improvements it plans to build over the next six years through the development of a six-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The first two years of the City's CIP is termed the "Capital Budget," and it represents the list of projects formally approved and funded by elected officials.

The City of Lincoln's Charter requires that before the City Council can approve a capital project it must undergo a test of "Comprehensive Plan conformity." This means that the Planning Commission or Planning Department must issue a report stating whether the proposed capital expenditure is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Should the project be found to be not in conformance with the Plan, the City Council can still approve the project. No equivalent Plan conformity standard is applied in the County's CIP process, however the Lancaster County Road and Bridge Construction Program is reviewed for conformance with the Comprehensive Plan and LRTP .

A companion document to the City's CIP, called the Transportation Improvement Program or TIP, is prepared on an annual basis. This task is assigned to the Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization, a policy making board comprised of representatives from local government and transportation authorities that reviews transportation issues and develops transportation plans and programs for Lincoln and Lancaster County. The TIP gathers together in a single document those local, State and Federal transportation capital projects proposed for the next four years. These include improvements for streets and highways, airports, railroad support facilities, trails, and public transit. Transportation projects must have a finding of substantial conformity to the Comprehensive Plan before they can be included in the TIP. The MPO's fiscally constrained Long Range Transportation Plan requires that all projects programmed must fall within the limits of funding that can be reasonably expected.

Lancaster County prepares an annual Road and Bridge Construction Program, commonly referred to as the "County 1 and 6 Program" because it includes the projects and programs for the first year and a more generalized list of projects going out 6 years in the future. The County 1 and 6 Program supports the projects identified on the Lancaster County Future Road Improvements map, which is a part of the MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan. This program identifies not only capital improvements but also maintenance projects such as grading and graveling of roads. Projects that use federal funding or are part of a regional system are included in the TIP.

### ***Private Sector Contributions***

Private investment is a significant part of the funding used to construct infrastructure in new developments. Most local streets, sidewalks, water, sanitary sewer, and stormwater facilities are built and paid for by the private developer, and impact fees contribute to the larger infrastructure components. Decisions made in the private sector play an important role in managing and guiding the expansion of the urban area. Expenditures from private sources are critical to furthering the growth of the community. Privately funded projects are also expected to conform to the goals and strategies of the Comprehensive Plan.

### ***Strategies for the Capital Improvement Program***

- The CIP should be utilized to provide a systematic and predictable forum for determining the timing of infrastructure improvements.
- Infrastructure improvements should continue to be implemented only in areas identified for development in the Lincoln/ Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan. One of the most important tools in financing is adherence to the physical plan for the community. Following the Plan for development and systematic improvements throughout Lincoln increases efficiency in construction and maximizes the community's investment.
- The top priority for the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is to maintain existing infrastructure.
- Fully serving Tier I, Priority A areas is a priority.

- Infrastructure funding to serve the growing community relies upon adequate revenue from all sources, including gas tax allocation, wheel tax, impact fees, and water and wastewater fees. It is a priority to explore innovative funding strategies and new sources to fund infrastructure projects.
- Use the CIP as a planning and programming guide.

## On-Going Comprehensive Plan Activities

While the Comprehensive Plan may have received formal approval, certain long-range planning tasks remain to be completed or continued as part of the Plan's implementation. These include:

**Interagency Cooperation and Coordination.** Broad involvement of numerous public agencies and departments were used in the Plan's formulation. The cooperation and coordination of efforts with these groups needs to remain in place during the Plan's implementation.

**Joint Planning Commission and Planning Department.** The City and County created a joint City-County Planning Commission and a single City-County Planning Department more than fifty years ago. This structure has served the community well over this period. It is intended that this structure remain in place as a means for furthering the implementation of the Plan.

**City-County Common.** The City Council, County Board, and Lincoln Mayor may hold a joint meeting to discuss issues of common concern to them. This group is known as the City-County Common. The Common provides a regular opportunity for the elected officials to discuss planning issues of joint interest to them.

**MPO Officials Committee and Technical Committee.** Through the Metropolitan Planning Organization structure, the Officials and Technical Committees lend additional policy and technical oversight to the process. These standing groups meet on a regular basis to review, discuss, and approve matters relating to the area-wide transportation planning process. This includes the annual MPO Unified Planning Work Program, Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Annual Certification, Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and other related studies and programs.

**Subarea Planning and Other Studies.** The Comprehensive Plan provides broad guidance for achieving the community's stated Vision. Putting details to the Plan takes additional effort. One means of doing this is through the preparation of subarea plans. Subarea plans offer greater details about the intended future of an area of the community — including land uses, infrastructure requirements, and development policies and standards. Many of these subarea plans are prepared by the City-County Planning Department, while some are prepared by other agencies and departments.

**Design Review Boards.** Design review is coordinated through three boards, each with specific responsibilities: Urban Design Committee, Historic Preservation Commission, and Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission.

**Complete Streets Committee.** The committee is tasked with discussing how to implement Complete Streets within the community. The committee is an interdepartmental group comprised of representatives from Planning, Lincoln Transportation & Utilities, StarTran, Urban Development, Building and Safety, Parks and Recreation, and the Health Department.

Subarea plans considered part of this Comprehensive Plan include:

- [Wilderness Park Subarea Plan; February 2000](#)
- [NRGIS Greenprint Challenge, August 2001](#)
- [City of Lincoln Strategic Plan for HUD Entitlement Programs; FY 2013-2017, Urban Development](#)
- [Lincoln Water System Facilities Master Plan, June 2014](#)
- [Lincoln Wastewater Facilities Master Plan, November 2015](#)
- [Watershed Master Plans:](#)
  - [Beal Slough Stormwater Master Plan, May 2000](#)
  - [Southeast Upper Salt Creek Watershed Stormwater Master Plan, 2003](#)
  - [Stevens Creek Watershed Master Plan, 2005](#)
  - [Cardwell Branch Watershed Master Plan, 2007](#)
  - [Deadmans Run Watershed Master Plan, 2007](#)
  - [Little Salt Creek Watershed Master Plan, 2009](#)
  - [Antelope Creek Watershed Basin Management Plan, 2012](#)
  - [South Salt Creek Watershed Master Plan, 2014](#)
  - [Haines Branch Watershed Master Plan, 2014](#)
  - [Middle Creek Watershed Master Plan, 2014](#)
  - [Upper Wagon Train Watershed Master Plan, June, 2017](#)
  - [Oak Creek Watershed Master Plan, May 2018](#)
  - [Lynn Creek Watershed Master Plan, May 2018](#)
  - [North Salt Creek Watershed Master Plan, May 2018](#)
- [The Implementation Plan for the Conservation of Nebraska's Eastern Saline Wetlands, 2003](#)
- [Lincoln Public Schools 10 year Plan, December 2019](#)
- [Lincoln Airport F.A.R. Part 150 Noise Compatibility Study, 2003](#)
- [Transit Development Plan, April 2016](#)
- [South Haymarket Neighborhood Plan, December 2015](#)
- [Parks and Recreation 10 Year Facilities Plan, 2019](#)
- [Downtown Lincoln Master Plan, December 2018](#)
- [Lincoln Affordable Housing Coordinated Action Plan, December 2020](#)
- [33rd and Cornhusker Subarea Plan, December 2020](#)
- [City of Lincoln Climate Action Plan, March 2021](#)

As part of the Annual Plan Status Report process, the Planning Director should complete a yearly review of all subarea plans that become five years of age and older. This review would be for the purpose of determining the continued viability and relevance of those subareas plans to the Comprehensive Plan and the long range planning process.

### **Plan Amendments**

The Plan is the community's collective vision. Yet, change is inevitable. New technologies and new community needs will arise during the planning period which were not foreseen during the Plan's development. Jobs, housing, transportation, goods and services will shift over time. The amendment process to the Plan must accommodate and help manage the inevitable change in a way that best promotes, and does not compromise, the community's core values, health and well being. The Plan amendment process must be an open and fair process, utilizing sound planning, economic, social and ecological principals.

Amendments to the Plan may be submitted in writing to the Planning Director by any group or individual at any time during the year. The Planning Director may elect to forward the Plan amendment request to the Planning Commission upon submission, or wait to include the request in a compilation that is reviewed by the Planning Commission once each year.

### **Plan Update Process**

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requires that communities maintain a fiscally constrained Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) that is updated every 5 years and embodies at least a 20-year planning horizon in order to receive federal transportation funds. The Lincoln MPO's 2050 LRTP is a companion to the Transportation chapter in the 2050 Comprehensive Plan. By the year 2025, the community will need to begin the process to update the LRTP, and the Comprehensive Plan to meet federal requirements. The update process currently assumes that the Comprehensive Plan undergoes a major update every ten years with a minor update at five years.